



USC University of Southern California

The Music of John Williams

Units: 2

Term—Day—Time: Fall 2020—Wednesdays—12:00–1:50pm (Pacific Time)

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Tim Greiving

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: Virtually anytime

Contact Info: tim.greiving@usc.edu

Course Description

John Williams is arguably the most important film composer of all time, and one of the most important *composers* in our lifetime. He's been an influential force not only in cinema but popular culture at large. He is America's unofficial composer laureate, the Mozart of the movies. Steven Spielberg and George Lucas created the dreams of several generations with their movies; Williams gave our dreams their musical personality. Movies replaced religion in the 20th century; Williams wrote the church music of our age. This course will not be heavily *musicological*, but rather focus on the narrative, emotional, and psychological roles his scores have played in the context of their films. We will examine the breadth and depth of an unparalleled career, which has spanned from collaborations with Frank Sinatra and Alfred Hitchcock to Kobe Bryant and JJ Abrams.

Recommended Reading

- Brief JW biography (Blackboard / Content)
- Sample chapter from my book: *Indy's Very First Adventure* (Blackboard)
- [Star Wars interview](#) from 1997, *Film Score Monthly*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Weekly films and reflections

I will assign two films to watch in advance of each class period. You will write a short (150 words) reflection on one of the scores in keeping with the type of discussion and analysis we do in class. **Due Tuesdays at midnight.**

(You will likely need to pay to rent or download many of the films I assign—although, definitely always check any streaming services you're subscribed to and see if they're carrying the movie. I've tried to ensure that every assigned film is at least rentable on Amazon Prime or iTunes. Consider this cost the equivalent of purchasing a textbook.)

Midterm essay

You will pick one feature film scored by John Williams and write an essay (1500 words) about the role his score plays in that film—either analyzing it cue by cue, or from more of a “big picture” perspective—with a brief introduction about the film.

Final Exam

A short-answer exam, the culmination of the major subjects and ideas we discuss in class. It will be administered inside Blackboard and scheduled for the period of our final class, but exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

Grading Breakdown

Grades will be recorded in the Blackboard gradebook. *Participation* will be measured by your level of engagement (either vocally or through chat) in our weekly Zoom class discussions and watch parties.

Assignment	% of Grade
Weekly reflections (12)	40
Midterm essay	25
Participation	10
Final exam	25
Total	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale.

A 93-100

A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Policies

Late work

You are allowed up to one late reflection (to be submitted by the subsequent class period). Beyond that, any late assignments will be graded as 0.

Attendance

Regular “attendance” at our synchronous class discussions is important and highly advised, and your participation there will count positively towards your final grade. If you know that you’re regularly unable to make the live appointments, please contact me and special considerations will be made.

Course evaluation

You will have an opportunity to submit comments on the mid-semester evaluation and the standard USC course evaluation survey at the end of the semester. Be honest!

Course Schedule

Week 1

Introduction - Who is John Williams, and what shaped him? A look at “Johnny’s” family, early years, and artistic influences.

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Required films for Week 2:

- *You Are Here* (1952) | [YouTube](#)
- *Daddy-O* (1961)

- *None But the Brave* (1965)

Week 2

The Swingin' '60s

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Required films for Week 3:

- *Images* (1972)
- *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972)
- BONUS: *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971)

Week 3

The pre-Blockbusters of the 1970s

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Required films for Week 4:

- *The Sugarland Express* (1974)
- *Jaws* (1975)
- BONUS: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1978)

Week 4

Steven Spielberg

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Required films for Week 5:

- *Star Wars* (1977)
- *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)
- BONUS: *Return of the Jedi* (1983)

Week 5

George Lucas and *Star Wars*

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Required films for Week 6:

- *Family Plot* (1976)
- *Superman* (1978)
- BONUS: *The Fury* (1978)

Week 6

The 1970s

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Required films for Week 7:

- *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)
- *E.T.* (1982)
- BONUS: *The River* (1984)

Week 7

The early 1980s

--MIDTERM DUE--

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Required films for Week 8:

- *Empire of the Sun* (1987)
- *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989)
- BONUS: *The Accidental Tourist* (1988)

Week 8

The late 1980s

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Required films for Week 9:

- *Home Alone* (1990)
- *Hook* (1991)
- BONUS: *JFK* (1991)

Week 9

The early 1990s

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Required films for Week 10:

- *Jurassic Park* (1993)
- *Schindler's List* (1993)
- BONUS: *Sabrina* (1995)

Week 10

The mid-'90s

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Required films for Week 11:

- *Nixon* (1995)

- *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)
- BONUS: *Stepmom* (1998)

Week 11

The late 1990s

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Required films for Week 12:

- *A.I.* (2001)
- *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004)
- BONUS: *Catch Me if You Can* (2002)

Week 12

The 2000s

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Required films for Week 13:

- *Lincoln* (2012)
- *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015)
- BONUS: *War Horse* (2011)

Week 13

The 2010s and beyond

--FINAL EXAM--

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

You will need a laptop, internet access, and an operating system that allows you to download Zoom and Slack. We may also be using a Google Chrome extension that allows us to do a Netflix watch party, but possibly not.

USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please submit an application. The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)
[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Synchronous session recording notice

As required by USC, the synchronous sessions for this course will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously. This policy does not apply to individual lessons.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Please do not share or otherwise distribute class materials, music scores or recordings produced by me or any students in the conduct of this course without expressed permission.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.